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MODEST

REMARKS

UPON THE

BISHOP of *LONDON*'s

LETTER

CONCERNING the late

EARTHQUAKES.

[Price Six pence.]

MODEST

REMARKS

UPON THE

BISHOP of *LONDON's*

LETTER

CONCERNING the late

EARTHQUAKES.

By One of the People called QUAKERS.

And now, O ye Prieſts, this Commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to Heart, to give Glory unto my Name, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I will even ſend a Curſe upon you, and I will curſe your Bleſſings: Yea, I have curſed them already becauſe ye do not lay it to Heart. —— Therefore I alſo made you contemptible and baſe before all the People, as ye have not kept *my Way, but have been* PARTIAL *in the Law.*

Malachi, ii. *1ſt. 2d. and 3d. Verſes.*

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TO THE

BISHOP

OF

LONDON.

Friend THOMAS,

VERILY I have perused thy Letter Addressed to the *Clergy* and *Inhabitants* of the Cities of *London* and *Westminster* with great Attention, and must acknowledge to thee with Concern, that I am exceedingly disappointed in the Expectation I had raised to myself from that Work. The Solemnity, Friend, of the Occasion, the Seriousness and Consequence of the Subject treated of, and the Relation thou pretendest to stand in to the Inhabitants of these Cities, made me believe, that Nothing would be omitted, that was Necessary to awaken the Conscience, and inform the Understandings of all Degrees of People, within thy Charge. But how vain is human Wisdom, and how infinitely short-sighted are its Researches, when it relies upon itself, and is unassisted by that Spirit, to whom all Events are known, who search-

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eth the Hearts and tryeth the Reins of the Children of Men!

THY Letter, Friend, inſtead of awakening the Conſcience of the hardened Sinner, or confirming the Faith of the ſtaggering Believer, has confounded their Underſtandings, and led them into a Labyrinth, out of which it is impoſſible they ſhould ever extricate themſelves by the Strength of the mere natural Man.

THOU haſt without any Authority, (for thou diſclaimeſt all Inſpiration from the *Holy Spirit*) repreſented the two Shocks of an Earthquake, lately felt, as a ſupernatural Event; and magiſterially pronounced them the Effects of a ſpecial Providence, threatning Vengeance upon a wicked and profligate Generation. Who knoweth the Councils of the Almighty? Strange and wonderful are all his Works, and his Ways paſt finding out. What is Man, that he ſhould dive into the Secrets of his Providence, or the Son of Man, that he ſhould deal out his Judgments according to his vain Imaginations? Verily, Friend, Thou waſt under no Temptation to make ſuch an uſe of that Diſpenſation of his Providence; and thou mighteſt have found ſufficient Matter from a natural Effect (as thoſe, for aught we know to the contrary, certainly were) to have excited thy Readers to a ſincere Repentance, without arrogating to thyſelf a Knowledge to which thou haſt not the ſmalleſt Claim, or furniſhing the Ungodly, in the firſt Line of thy Work, with Matter of Prejudice againſt all that thou couldſt ſay; ſince they could plainly diſcover by their natural Underſtanding, that without the Gift of the Holy Spirit, thou couldſt not, and oughteſt not to have aſcribed to a ſpecial Providence, what may be rationally explained by the general Laws that govern Matter and Motion. Theſe Laws are, no doubt, in the Hands of the Almighty: and the ſovereign Diſpoſer of all Things may, for the wiſe Purpoſes of his Providence, ſtop, alter, or controul them at his Pleaſure. But, becauſe we believe and are aſſured, that he hath reſerved the Power to himſelf, muſt we, weak-ſighted Mortals, have the Arrogance to conclude, that, on every Occurrence,

currence, which appears in the leaſt ſingular and unuſual, this ſpecial Power is exerted; and that the Order of Nature is inverted, as often as our gloomy Imagination is pleaſed to think that it ought to be ſo?

We are taught from Holy Writ, that Cities and whole Nations have been deſtroyed by the eſpecial Vengeance of God for their heinous Tranſgreſſions. But except we had been ſo told by an infallible Spirit, and who could not deceive us by falſe Conjectures, we had no Right, nay, it would be impious in us ſo much as to ſuſpect that ſuch Cities ſuffered for their Sins by the Hands of a ſpecial Providence. *Judge not, leſt ye be judged,* is a Precept of univerſal Extent, and ſtrongly inculcated by the Founder of our Holy Religion, who in a particular Manner checked the *Jews*, who of all Nations were the aptest to explain every Occurrence into a ſpecial and revengeful Providence. "There were preſent at that Seaſon ſome, "that told him of the *Galileans*, whoſe Blood *Pilate* had "mingled with the Sacrifices; and *Jeſus* anſwering ſaid "unto them, ſuppoſe ye, that theſe *Galileans* were Sin-"ners above all the *Galileans*, becauſe they ſuffered "ſuch things? I tell you Nay, but except you repent "ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh. Or thoſe Eighteen, upon "whom the Tower in *Siloe* fell, and ſlew them, think "ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt "in *Jeruſalem?* I tell you Nay, but except you repent, "ye ſhall likewiſe periſh." *Luke* Ch. xiii. ver. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

This, Friend, is the Senſe of the Son of God upon a Caſe almoſt ſimilar to what your Subject led you to treat of; and how different is it from the Senſe you would put upon a very natural Occurrence? How much more amiable is the Picture he gives us of the Father in that Parable that immediately followeth the above Verſes. Verſe 6, He ſpeaks alſo this Parable. "A certain Man "had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came "and ſought Fruit thereon, and found none. Then ſaid "he unto the Dreſſer of his Vineyard, behold theſe three "*Years* come ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find "none;

" none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?
" and he anſwering ſaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this
" Year alſo, till I ſhall dig about it, and dung it: And
" if it bear Fruit, well; and if not, then after thou ſhalt
cut it down." How much more amiable, I ſay, is the Doctrine our Bleſſed Redeemer would inculcate by this ſhort Parable, than the Idea we conceive from explaining every natural Accident as the Manifeſtation of the Wrath of an angry, incenſed, and avenging God! The *Jewiſh* Doctors, like you, Friend, were willing to explain the Sufferings of the *Galileans* into a ſpecial Act of Divine Vengeance for their Sins; which they certainly believed very heinous, as theſe People differed with them in ſome religious Points; and, no doubt, might from thence take ſome Occaſion to preach up Repentance to the reſt of the *Jewiſh* Nation. But he, who could not err, whoſe Knowledge was infinite, checked their uncharitable Preſumption, teaches them, that they are not to judge of the Sins of a People by the natural Calamities that fall upon them; nor to paint the Deity as ready on every Occaſion to execute Vengeance againſt Sinners. "As I
" live, ſaith the Lord, I take no Pleaſure in the Death
" of a Sinner, but rather that they ſhould repent and
" turn from their Evil Ways."

Now, Friend, without ſuppoſing the Shocks we felt any other than the Reſult of Natural Cauſes, thou mighteſt from thence have found ſufficient Matter to have rouſed the moſt hardened Sinner from the Lethargy of Sin and Death, by obſerving, that, beſides the many infinite Caſualties to which Life is expoſed, there are yet more terrible Accidents that may ſweep them off without a moments Warning, and plunge them into Eternity, loaded with the Weight of their Iniquities. By ſuppoſing ſuch Events never to happen, but as particular Inſtances of God's Vengeance againſt Sinners, the atrocious Sinner is rather led into Deſpair, than Repentance. Whereas, when we believe them the Reſult of a natural Cauſe, that may take Effect every moment of our Lives, of which we can have no Foreknowledge, nor the leaſt poſſible Means of Prevention, a rational

tional Creature, whoſe Underſtanding is not intirely blinded, or whoſe Conſcience is not judicially ſeared, muſt be awakened to Repentance, and prepare himſelf for the great Change, by *his forſaking evil Ways, and turning to the Lord his God with all his Heart and Strength.* Thou mighteſt from thence have availed thyſelf of all the Inſtances, that Hiſtory, ſacred and prophane, furniſhes thee with, of Cities and whole Nations, being deſtroyed by dreadful Calamities, without teaching thy Flock that uncharitable Doctrine, that ſuch natural Diaſters were the Effect of the peculiar Sins of theſe unhappy People. A very dreadful Earthquake happened in *Jamaica*, in the Year 92, that deſtroyed a great part of that Colony, and almoſt totally ruined the City of *Port-Royal.* Another within theſe few years ſwallowed up the greateſt Part of the Capital of *Peru*; and ſcarce a Year paſſes, but we hear of the dreadful Effects of Earthquakes in *Italy.* Doſt thou, like the Jewiſh Doctors above-mentioned, think, that theſe People were *Sinners above all others* that eſcaped that dreadful Viſitation? And yet, by ſuppoſing the two ſlight Shocks we have lately felt the Effects of a ſpecial Providence, that uncharitable Doctrine is fairly inferred; a Doctrine diametrically oppoſite to the Spirit of our Holy Religion. But I have ſaid enough to convince thee, that, in thus explaining that Event, thou haſt followed too much the Devices of worldly Wiſdom; and that thou thyſelf haſt fallen into a greater Error than thoſe Philoſophers, whoſe little Knowledge thou takeſt upon thee to deſpiſe.

But thou haſt not only, Friend, miſtaken the proper Uſe of thy Text, but in the Improvement of it thou haſt left unſaid many things that ought naturally to have occurred to thee, whether thou ſuppoſedſt the Shocks to be the Effect of a ſpecial or a general Providence. Verily, Friend, on ſuch an awful Occaſion, I expected, that thou wouldeſt have enumerated, without any palliation or diſguiſe, the many heinous Sins, that in this wicked Age are even a Diſgrace to Human Nature, and, after ſuch an Enumeration, thou wouldeſt candidly, and without Reſpect of Perſons, have pointed out the real Source of all theſe Iniquities that

overwhelm the Land, and have directed thy Flock to the natural Means of freeing themſelves from the Thraldom of Sin and Death. But in all this verily thou haſt fallen ſhort: For in the Liſt of the Crimes, with which thou haſt charged the People, thou haſt forgot the moſt atrocious, and taken notice of the moſt trivial of our Tranſgreſſions, and haſt miſſed intirely of the true Source of our growing Impiety, and left us altogether in the dark as to the Practical Method of *amending our ways, and turning again unto the God of our Fore fathers.*

The Firſt Sin thou takeſt Notice of, and what, by the Order in which thou haſt placed it, and the Concluſion thou haſt drawn from it, would appear in thy Senſe the Source of all our publick and private Tranſgreſſions, is the Number of bad Books with which the Town ſwarms. This indeed is a crying Sin, and much to be lamented: but, great as it is, it does not deſerve to lead the Van in a Liſt of National Sins, capable of drawing down the ſpecial Vengeance of the Almighty upon a whole People. Nor is its Influence ſo great, as to corrupt the Morals of the Generality of the Nation. Nine Parts in Ten never read Books of any Sort; and thoſe, that do, would make but a ſmall Proficiency in Vice, if they had no other School to learn it in, but Books and unclean Pictures. It is true, Friend, there are a great many impious Books, and indecent Prints, publickly ſold in our Streets; and they may have their Share in debauching the Morals of the People: but I would have thee to reflect, that there have been Periods of Time, when that Evil was more to be complained of than at preſent. I verily believe, that there are not the Hundredth Part of irreligious Books now printed, as were in the Reign of *Charles* II. There is ſo little of the Spirit of Religion now prevailing that the Subject, even when ſpoken of in ridicule, is diſagreeable to the Polite of the preſent Age. But when thou waſt ſpeaking of bad Books, there is one thing thou mighteſt have mentioned with as much Propriety as Part of the Sins of the Times; that is, the Want of good Books, the only

only proper Antidote againſt the Venom of thoſe thou ſo bitterly complaineſt againſt: The Age has not only produced fewer bad Books, than ſome former; but it has been likewiſe remarkably deficient in producing any thing fit to improve the Morals or Underſtanding of the People. And this is not owing to the want of Encouragement for ſuch Labours: For, bad and wicked as the Age is, I never heard of a good Book, either of Science, Religion, or Morality, but what met with proper Encouragement from the Publick: but a Spirit of Lukewarmneſs, in Matter of Religion and Devotion, in thoſe, who are well paid for being its Guardians, prevails ſo much, that they cannot be induced to enter the Liſts with Error and Infidelity; but ſatisfy themſelves with exclaiming, in general Terms, againſt the immoral Writings of others, without giving themſelves the Trouble to impugn their Errors, or to furniſh the People with Preſervatives againſt their miſchievous Effects. And if, at any Time, they are tempted to take up the Pen in Defence of ſome favourite Doctrine, the Controverſy is handled with ſo little Charity or Decency, that an honeſt, well-meaning, Chriſtian, throws aſide the Book, diſguſted at a Spirit ſo unbecoming the Followers of *Chriſt Jeſus*. In a Word, Friend *Thomas*, I think this Lazineſs in thoſe, endued with all the Advantages of Light and Knowledge, and whoſe Time ought to be chiefly employed in ſuch Labours, to be a much greater Grievance, and a more infallible Sign of the total Decay of the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, and a greater Reaſon for the Increaſe of Infidelity and Prophaneneſs, than all the bad Books, obſcene Prints, and Hiſtories of Proſtitutes, that have been publiſhed for this Century paſt. And to ſhew thee, that if good Books are compiled, there is no fear of Encouragement even from this profligate Generation, Thou needſt only recollect, that thy *little* Letter has brought more Money to thy Bookſeller, than all the Impreſſions of prophane Books, of any Kind, have brought to the whole Trade for this Twelvemonth paſt.

After that thou haſt finiſhed thy melancholy Declamation againſt prophane Books and Prints, the Exceſs of our publick Diverſions takes the next Place in the Liſt of deadly Sins. This is exaggerated by an Inſtance of fifteen or ſixteen Advertiſements, even in the Holy Seaſon of Lent; and thou goeſt piouſly on to mention Idleneſs, Gaming, *&c.* Theſe are terrible Crimes indeed, Friend. But does not thee think, that there are many others of a deeper Dye, and of which theſe are only trivial Conſequences? Yes, thou knoweſt there are; thou couldſt not forget them, being too glaring to have eſcaped thy Penetration. Yet, thou haſt skipped them over, or taken but very ſlight Notice of them. For thou hookeſt in but one Crime more, before thou ſeemeſt to finiſh thy grand Charge, and to begin thy Application. Verily, I could have wiſhed in Charity, that thou hadſt left that one Crime out of thy Liſt on this Occaſion. The Crime, I mean, is the Mention thou makeſt of the Increaſe of Popery. Thou art to remember, Friend, that thou haſt ſuppoſed the Almighty juſtly offended at the Number and Heinouſneſs of our National Tranſgreſſions, and that thou art giving a Liſt of the Tranſgreſſions, that thou thinkeſt capable of drawing down upon us the ſpecial Judgments of the Divine Being. Now, canſt thou in Charity, as a Chriſtian, think, that Popery could be numbered amongſt theſe deadly Sins? The Errors of that ſuperſtitious Church are many; but God forbid, that we ſhould imagine, that their Errors, in Point of Faith, are ſuch, as to merit theſe ſpecial Marks of the Divine Wrath. Had that been the Caſe, this Iſland, and all Europe, muſt many Centuries ago, have felt the moſt dreadful Effects of theſe Calamities. If thou meaneſt in that Paragraph thoſe, who continue obſtinate in Error, in ſpite of Conviction, and the Dictates of their own Conſcience, thou ſayeſt right, and mighteſt have mentioned all ſuch of every Perſuaſion in this Iſland. But, if thou meaneſt the groſs Body of the Catholicks, whom we are bound in Charity to believe to act from Principle and Conviction, (and, indeed, they

they muſt be ſtrangely infatuated if they do not;) thou haſt verily been exceedingly to blame, to mention them on this Occaſion. For remember, that from a Principle common to all Proteſtants, if they act from rational Conviction, or what appears to them as ſuch, they are as much entitled to the gracious Mercies of a good God, as thee, or I, is; and, conſequently, the Increaſe of their Tenets, however erroneous they may appear to us, cannot, with any Colour of Juſtice, be reckoned amongſt the Liſt of Sins, capable of drawing down ſpecial Judgments upon this Land.

The Diviſions, that are amongſt the Followers of *Chriſt Jeſus*, is indeed Part of the enormous Wickedneſs of this Age. Theſe we ought to lament in general; but its being greatly wanting to that Charity, which is the diſtinguiſhing Badge of Chriſtianity, to mark out any one of the ſeveral Sects, that profeſs the ſame eſſential Doctrines, with ſuch a dreadful Diſtinction. But thou haſt not only placed the Catholicks as the immediate Objects of God's avenging Judgments, but thou haſt repreſented ſome of their Doctrines in a Light which they do not deſerve. Thou wouldſt inſinuate, that the Cordial, as thou calleſt it, of Abſolution, is believed by the Catholicks, to be of Effect, without a thorough and ſincere Repentance. We ought, thou knoweſt, Friend, ever to ſpeak Truth: which Truth never ſtands in need of the Aids of Falſhood. Now, the Catholicks, in all their Writings, lay it down, and teach it as a Tenet of their Church, that Abſolution, however ſolemn, or by whomſoever pronounced, is ſo far from being of any Effect without Repentance, Amendment, and Retribution, if in their Power, that the thus accepting it is adding the heinous Sin of Sacrilege to all their other Sins. Now, by what Means canſt thou ſuppoſe, that this Cordial of Abſolution, however ineffectual thou and I may think it, could be greedily ſwallowed by Perſons averſe to the wholeſom Food of Repentance, by which their ſpiritual Condition might be gradually mended? If they ſwallow it, they muſt already have digeſted

geſted the Food of Repentance; if they have not, they know, as well as thee, that they have ſwallowed a Poiſon inſtead of a Cordial. If thou muſt needs, at a Time when thou oughteſt, inſtead of awakening Chriſtian Diviſions, to have done all in thy Power to unite all its Followers in one Bond of Peace and charitable Union; if thou muſt needs, I ſay, at ſuch a Time, employ thy Rhetoric againſt the Errors of that Church, ſure thou mighteſt have pitched upon ſome one founded in Truth, and not have mentioned as Fact a Thing ſo eaſily red-argued. At other Times Zeal for the Cauſe of Truth may, tho' prepoſterouſly enough, prompt a Man to blacken his Adverſary with imaginary Crimes, in order, by a kind of pious Fraud, to prepoſſeſs the People againſt the Errors in his Doctrine and Practice.

But on ſuch an Occaſion as this, and from ſo diſtinguiſhed a Hand, we had Reaſon to expect, Friend, that every Fact advanced ſhould have been literally and manifeſtly true. I remember an Inſtance known all over *Europe*, that might have ſet thee right, if thou wert really ignorant of the Nature of *Romiſh* Abſolution. That is, that, notwithſtanding the great Powers of that deſpotic King, *Lewis* the XIVth, all his Authority could not prevail over any one Prieſt in his Dominions to give him Abſolution, or adminiſter to him the Sacrament whilſt he lived in a ſtate of Uncleanneſs with Madam *Maintenon*. He was ſo far from reſenting their ſupporting an Authority, he thought them legally poſſeſſed of, that, for the faithful Diſcharge of their Duty, he loaded his Confeſſors with Biſhopricks; and at laſt at their Inſtances privately married his Miſtreſs; and then, and not till then, received Abſolution. I, for my part, Friend, think the Abſolution pronounced by thy Church, and that by the Church of *Rome*, or by any human Creature alive, to be vain and uſeleſs, and the Product of ſpiritual Pride and Vanity. But the Spirit of Truth, that is within me, would not permit me to paſs over ſo groſs a Miſrepreſentation of Fact, without a proper Reprehenſion.

This, with a very gentle Touch upon the want of a due Execution of the Laws, (for which thou doſt not forget

to

to ask Pardon) finiſhes the Bead-roll of National Sins, that are to draw down the immediate Vengeance of the moſt High. Thou then proceedeſt to hint that a due Execution of the Laws already in Being, and the particular Care of Maſters of Families, may bring about a Reformation, and avert thoſe Judgments thou ſuppoſeſt to be threatened by the two very terrible Shocks of an Earthquake. Strange Chimæra, to think that Wickedneſs, grown to ſuch a height as to merit the ſpecial Notice of the Divine Being, and interwoven as it were with our very Nature, ſhould be rooted out by ſuch weak Means! How amazing is it, that a Phyſician ſhould pretend to cure a complicated Malady, without once touching at the Source of the Diſorder, by ſlightly tickling the outwards Parts, and leaving the Vitals to periſh under a mortal Gangrene.

Every Man's Knowledge, yea, verily, every old Woman's Knowledge, in this Kingdom, might have picked out a Multitude of Inſtances, and thoſe much more flagrant than any thou haſt mentioned, of the general Wickedneſs and Depravity of the Age we live in. That was no Secret; and we needed neither Biſhop, Prophet, nor Earthquake, to remind us, that the Cup of our Iniquity is near full, and that nothing but the ſuperabundant Mercy and long-ſuffering Patience of the Almighty, could hinder us from falling a Sacrifice to his offended Juſtice. For it is one of the Sins peculiar to this Age, that we have been induſtrious in finding out new Species of Wickedneſs, and that we never commit an old Fault, but for want of Invention to diverſify the Crime, and heighten the Reliſh of Iniquity by the horrid Novelty of it; and that we are ſo far from pretending to act thro' Ignorance or want of Knowledge of our Duty, that the greateſt Pleaſure of our Iniquities conſiſts in our Knowledge of their being prohibited by God, and deſtructive of our future and eternal Happineſs. An univerſal Depravation of Manners reigns thro' all Sorts of People in this ſinful Land; and an utter Abhorrence and Deteſtation of every Thing, that bears but the ſmalleſt

ſmalleſt Reſemblance of Virtue and Piety, have poſſeſſed the Hearts and Minds of this profligate Generation. The Kingdom of God is not among the wicked Inhabitants of this Iſland. The Kingdom of Satan prevails and reigns triumphant in our debauched Streets. Our Nobles frequent anti-chriſtian Diverſions, and forget the Lord their God, and walk every Man according to the Devices of his own Heart: While a venal Contagion has ſeized the whole Body of the People, who worſhip Money as their God, and have ſaid unto Silver and Gold, ye are our Deliverers, and our ſure Help in Time of Need. There is nothing ſo ſacred, but what they willingly barter for filthy Lucre. Juſtice, Honeſty, Right and Wrong, are no longer underſtood in this ſinful Land; but every thing is weighed in the Scales of Gain. Their very Souls they bring to the Account of Profit and Loſs, making light of Futurity, and laughing at Hell Torments, as the Invention of Prieſts and Stateſmen. Whoredom, Adulteries, Fornications, and all manner of beaſtly Uncleanneſs, are openly avowed; and he who does not plunge himſelf into all the Debaucheries of the Stews, with a high and open Hand, is looked upon as a poor narrow-ſpirited Creature unworthy of the Company of Men of a noble and exalted Genius. Luxury, Drunkenneſs, and Gluttony, have overſpread the Tables and Dwellings of all Degrees of People. We ſeek the Bowels of the Earth for Jewels to adorn us, and travel to the moſt diſtant Quarters of the World in Queſt of whatever may gratify our vicious Appetites, and yet never think of the God, that furniſhes our unnatural Wants. Our Women are aſhamed of Modeſty. They deck themſelves in gorgeous Apparel, and expoſe half their Perſons naked to allure the Eyes of the Wicked. Murder, Robberies, and the moſt barefaced Perjuries, are every Day to be met with in our Streets; even Crimes that would ſhock Modeſty but to mention are as common as Petty Larceny. Yet we are ſpared, and the ſinful Land ſtands a Monument of the long-ſuffering Patience of the Almighty.

This,

This, Friend, is a Supplement to the Liſt of thy deadly Sins; and doſt not thee think, that it makes a moſt dreadful Appearance, and that ſome of them merited to be mentioned in a more ſerious Manner than thou haſt done? And yet there is one Evil under the Sun, which I have not hitherto deſcanted on; and that Evil is as great, perhaps, as all the reſt put together: And the Spirit moveth me to think, and deliver unto thee, that this Evil, I am now going to expoſe, is the Spring, Source, and Fountain-Head, of all the black Crimes I have rehearſed, and of many more, that could not come within the Compaſs of my Knowledge.

I would willingly, if I durſt, prevaricate, and conceal this fatal Evil; but as the Eyes of the People are upon us, as their Fears are awakened, and they ſeem in ſome Meaſure willing to find out a Way to rid them of this Load of Sin, that ſtands as a Wall of Braſs between them and the Mercy of their God, it is neceſſary, ſince we have pointed out the Malady, that we ſhould diſplay the Source, in order to direct them to a Cure.

Thou wouldſt have a Reformation begin in Private Families: but alas! thou art fatally miſtaken. The Thing is impoſſible. It is building downwards. A great many People in this Iſland are ſo unhappily ſituated, that they muſt continue to be wicked, and to adminiſter to Vice, or ceaſe to eat. In ſhort, their Circumſtances are ſo connected with the prevailing Vices, that they have no other Choice left, but either to ſtarve here, or ſubmit to be damned hereafter. This is a dreadful Caſe, Friend, and hardly credible: yet a little Knowledge of the World, and Acquaintance with the preſent Times, will furniſh innumerable Inſtances of Wretches in this unhappy Dilemma. What muſt ſuch People do? Doſt think a Sermon, or a Paſtoral Letter, can perſuade them to ſtarve here for the ſake of an happy Hereafter? No! Appetites are ſtrong; and as this Claſs of Men have many great Examples to follow, they are no ways intimidated by what either Thou haſt, or I could utter unto

them on this tremendous Occaſion. Before then the Body of the People can be reformed without a Miracle, it is neceſſary, that theſe Publick Vices ſhould be plucked up by the Roots; and that the Reformation ſhould begin amongſt thoſe of higher Rank, amongſt our Rulers, and the Grandees of the Land: but more eſpecially, amongſt that Order of Men, the worldly and diſſolute Example of ſome of whom have moſt contributed to taint the Morals, and pervert the Judgment of the Community. I mean, Friend, thy Brethren, the Clergy. Start not, my Brother! I am not going to bring a railing Accuſation againſt thee in Perſon, or to Accuſe thy Fraternity in a Lump. I verily believe there may be a great Number of thy Profeſſion, who make a Conſcience of their Duty; and as much as lyeth in their Power, both by Precept and Example, endeavour to ſtem the Torrent of Vice and Immorality. But thou knoweſt as well as I, that there are many in the World, who are Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing, who deſtroy the Flock they ſhould feed, and poiſon by their Example the pure Streams of the Goſpel, with which they ought to water the Vineyard of the Lord. Its not to be concealed, nor palliated, that there is no Vice, however odious, practiſed by the blind Laity, but what is likewiſe committed by ſome of their more enlightened Teachers: This, Friend, is the great Evil I hinted at above. This is the Source of all our Woes, and here, and no where elſe, the Reformation muſt begin.

How is it poſſible for thee to think, that though the Clergy were to preach as with the Voice of Angels, that their Diſcourſes ſhould have any Effect upon the Minds or Morals of the People, as long as they ſee theſe very Clergy, or a great Number of them, acting diametrically oppoſite to the Doctrines they teach; and living in ſuch a Manner, as if they themſelves did not believe one Word of the ſacred Truths they are inculcating.

An inordinate Love of Money is a reigning Sin of the Age. Now, let all the Clergy of this Iſland join with one Voice in the Pulpit to preach it down, doſt thee think

think the Playing of their Lungs would be of any Significancy, as long as the People ſee, that theſe Men ſet as great a Value upon the ungodly Mammon, as the meaneſt of them can poſſibly do? When they ſee theſe pretended pious Preachers, like *Simon Magus*, purchaſing and ſelling the Holy Ghoſt for Money; ſwallowing Oaths for the Sake of Preferments, that for Years they had declared to be againſt their Conſciences; hunting eargerly after fat Livings, Tithes, and Pigs, and heaping up Pluralities, and Commendams, to gratify their Pride and Avarice: When at the ſame Time they grudge the leaſt Indulgence to the Drudges, to whoſe Care they commit the Souls of the People. With what Face can they preach againſt Luxury, and Senſuality, when they themſelves wallow in the Fat of the Land, and loll about in their Leathern Conveniencies, in ſadly unedifying Pomp, Pride, and Vanity? Chaſtity, Sobriety, and Temperance, are Virtues, perhaps as much Strangers in the Tents of *Levi*, as in the Tabernacles of the Tribe of *Nepthali*. But Pride, Spiritual Pride, the worſt of Pride, and the Itch of Domination have taken full Poſſeſſion of the Caſſock, and left the Laity but a faint Mimickry of that ugly Habit of the Soul: And as for Charity, and Chriſtian Benevolence, thoſe ſeem to be no Part of the Creed of a modern Prieſt. Inſtead of healing the Diviſions amongſt Chriſtians, bearing with the Weakneſs and Infirmities of their Brethren, and, like the Apoſtle, *becoming all Things to all Men, that by all Means ſome may be ſaved*; inſtead of yielding in Matters of Indifference, and endeavouring to bring about a Chriſtian Coalition, they are obſtinate in Trifles, tenacious of the Rags, Fringes, and Patches of Religion, and damn all that won't go to Heaven by the direct Path that they have marked out for them, but which they themſelves ſeem reſolved by their daily Practice never to travel.

When the People, Friend, obſerve, (and their Eyes are quicker than their Underſtanding) that the Parſon of the Pariſh winks at the Immorality of his Patron, becauſe he has great Livings in his Gift; when they ſee

him join in his ſenſual Exceſſes, and adminiſter to him the moſt Holy Rites of their Religion, tho' he knows him to live in open Uncleaneſs, perhaps in Adultery, and to betray, ſell, and ruin his Country, I ſay, Friend, when a Flock ſees this Shepherd thus proſtituting his Profeſſion, and caſting holy Things before Swine, and this only for the Hopes of a Plurality, or Commendam, or Dignity to feed his ſpiritual Pride with, is it poſſible for them to conclude thoſe Sins ſo heinous? Does not his Example influence thoſe of his Family, and the Examples of theſe thoſe of the Village, till the dreadful, black, Contagion ſpreads, like a Peſt, over a whole County? Who then are to blame for this? Why, verily, none but the profligate venal Clergyman. For if he exerted his Eccleſiaſtical Power, with as much Zeal againſt Vice and Prophaneneſs, as he does in the Recovery of his Tythes, the Great would be obliged to quit their open Sins, and the little ones would not be led aſtray by his ſcandalous Example.

But, it is time, my Friend *Thomas*, to draw towards a Concluſion. A Reformation is certainly neceſſary. For whether we are puniſhed by an Earthquake or not, the natural Tendency of Vice is ſuch, that a few Years longer Continuance of it muſt bring along with it Plagues enow to puniſh us grievouſly here, as we ſhall certainly meet a dreadful Reward hereafter. Let me adviſe thy Brethren, the Clergy, in all Charity and Meekneſs, to begin the great Work themſelves. Purge and make clean the Houſe of the Lord, and drive all Pollution from his Sanctuary. Let the Prieſthood that are proud become humble, meek, and lowly, even as was *Jeſus*, whoſe Servants they are. Let them put away the falſe Gods from amongſt them, and deſtroy the Idol they have ſet up in their Hearts; that is, let them baniſh the Love of Money, the Itch of Power and Dominion, either over the Minds or Temporalities of the People. Let him, that has two Livings, give one to his poor Brother; let him, that performeth the Labour of the Vineyard, receive alſo the Wages; and let not the Drone

Drone eat up the Meat of the Induſtrious Servant. Let them exert their Power without reſpect of Perſons, yet with all Humility and Meekneſs, not out of Malice, or to gratify their Spleen, but for the Love of Truth and Purity. In a Word, Friend, when they believe what they have ſworn at their Ordination to believe, and maintain; when they teach only what they believe, and act as they teach, then without the Gift of Prophecy I can foretell, that this Land will return to the Lord, and his Wrath will be turned from this Generation, and his Bleſſings multiplied upon our Childrens' Children, even unto the lateſt Ages of the World. But, Friend, till either thy Brethren do this of themſelves, or are compelled to it by their Superiours, nothing leſs than a divine Miracle can redeem this Land from the Slavery of Sin. May Somebody begin a thorough Reformation ſomewhere, that we may have Peace in our Days. The God of Peace be with thee, Friend! *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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